



## Fact Sheet

### Books Behind Bars

NSWALC's decision to launch its Books Behind Bars campaign was informed by a number of facts.

They include the following:

- A recent report from the Australian Institute of Criminology shows Aboriginal youth in NSW are nearly 26 times more likely to be jailed than their non-Indigenous peers.
- 4.4 per cent of the State's youth are Aboriginal. They account for 54 per cent of juvenile detainees.
- A second report from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research shows the Indigenous adult imprisonment rate rose by 37 per cent in Australia between 2001 and 2008.
- The Report noted the increase in NSW was 48 per cent but, with the possible exception of offences against justice procedures, it noted the increase in the imprisonment rate is not due to increased offending.
- Rather it stems from changes to the Bail Act and tougher remand and sentencing decisions from the law and order campaigns mounted by successive NSW Labor Governments.
- The report makes it clear that the growth in the Aboriginal imprisonment rates is a matter for concern for two reasons.
- Firstly, it is now more than 13 to 16 times higher than the imprisonment rate for non-Aboriginal Australians.
- Secondly all State and Territory Governments resolved to try and reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in prison. These included the current Labor Government in NSW, in the wake of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

- The policy objectives flowing from RCIADIC run contrary to the policies implemented as a result of the “law and order campaigns.”
- These have fuelled the need for more prisons with the inmate population continuing to grow significantly
- The NSW Government currently spends a staggering amount each year to maintain its prison system.
- The total capital and recurrent expenditure of Corrective Services NSW was \$1,090.7m in fiscal year 2008-09.
- There are currently more than 10,000 inmates in full time custody in the 31 prisons and correctional centres across NSW. A new facility being built at Nowra, and scheduled to open in December this year, will accommodate 600 male and female prisoners.
- There are eight maximum security facilities, 13 medium security, and 10 minimum security facilities in New South Wales.
- Aboriginal men, women and children are over-represented in all of them.
- Their ability to access reading and education materials is poor.
- The Library Services Section of Correctional Services NSW has told NSWALC there is a desperate need for Aboriginal specific books and educational materials in the NSW Prison system.
- It is being asked constantly by inmates for Aboriginal specific resources, books, educational materials and media.
- Library Services co-ordinates a successful donations program but would welcome the extension of the National Prison Book Program into NSW.
- It currently obtains resources from a range of sources including publishers, book suppliers, public libraries, special libraries and individuals.
- More than \$200,000 worth of books were obtained in the 2006-07 financial year--which was almost equivalent to the Department’s library book budget for that year.
- This is approximately \$25 per inmate per year---less than the cost of one quality paperback at today’s prices.
- The donated books are particularly important as they supply resources to smaller prisons in rural and remote areas which house a significant proportion of Aboriginal detainees.

## **Materials Required.**

Libraries in prisons have traditionally been a repository for old second hand books.

Corrective Services NSW are trying to change this with a number of innovative programs, including the donations program.

They have particular requirements on donated books and educational materials.

The Library will accept donations if they are:

- Of interest to users.
- In good physical condition.
- Fairly current or, if not, have some historical value.
- Of a subject not already covered by existing materials in the collection.
- Already held in the library and are used sufficiently to warrant other copies.

The National Prison Book Program has similar requirements. (see attached Fact Sheet on the Program)

NSWALC's Governing Council has committed the sum of \$5,000 for the purchase of Aboriginal specific books to immediately kick off its involvement in the book donation program.

Each of the four major Aboriginal publishers---Magabala Books, IAD Press, Aboriginal Studies Press and Indij Readers—are being approached to seek stocks at cost price for the first tranche of donations.

NSWALC would appreciate the involvement of all LALCs in this initiative.

All donations can be received at the NSWALC Aboriginal Resource Centre on the ground floor at 33 Argyle Street, Parramatta or at NSWALC's Zone Offices in Coffs Harbour, Dubbo and Queanbeyan.